

Editorial: Human-Centered Planning and Design: From Doxiadis's Ekistics to Contemporary and Future Visions

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It is increasingly recognized that while modernist approaches effectively addressed specific urban challenges of the early to mid-20th century, they often neglected the human dimension, resulting in a decline in community well-being and social interaction in cities. Automobile-centered planning has further restricted social interactions, contributing to a sense of isolation. Advancements in communication technology have also altered people's sense of belonging and interaction within their environments. The recent pandemic has underscored that, on a global scale, cities are incomplete without people in their public spaces, and that individuals cannot thrive without meaningful social connections (Low & Smart, 2023). By drawing upon insights from diverse countries, this issue on the theme of *Human-Centered Planning and Design: From Doxiadis's Ekistics to Contemporary and Future Visions* examines various perspectives, connecting the foundational ideas of Constantinos A. Doxiadis (Doxiadis, 1968) with contemporary approaches within a multidisciplinary framework, offering an exploration of the evolving relationship between urban planning and design, community well-being, and social interaction in cities.

Today's planners and architects recognize that space is influenced by social dynamics and the needs of users in media-rich environments. As people become more reliant on digital media, spatial priorities increasingly favor virtual connections - primarily maintained through screens - often at the cost of physical proximity. In the opening paper of this themed issue, Susan Drucker and Gary Gumpert (2024) urge planners to consider whether these mediated connections strengthen or undermine the social fabric of urban life. They explore how media theorist Marshall McLuhan's ideas, particularly his exchanges with C. A. Doxiadis, have influenced the concept of urban communication; and by reviewing media developments from 1973 to 2024, they illustrate how urban communication provides essential insights into the complexities of city life, emphasizing communication as central to understanding contemporary cities. This dependency, they advocate, goes beyond smart city technology, fundamentally altering how we design and experience space.

Derya Oktay (2024) offers a critical examination of the flaws in modern urban planning and highlights the shortcomings of contemporary practices. She calls for a revival of people-centered approaches that early visionaries like C. A. Doxiadis once championed. Oktay advocates for a holistic strategy that considers the interconnected social and environmental aspects of urban living, which includes re-evaluating transportation policies to reduce dependence on cars, enhancing the design of public and semi-public spaces by integrating them more effectively into housing areas, promoting pedestrian-friendly environments, and actively engaging communities in the planning process. This comprehensive approach also involves adopting flexible urban design strategies that respond to the evolving needs and preferences of society. By drawing inspiration from the integrated social-spatial units of traditional neighborhoods, she underscores the significance of adapting these ideas to suit contemporary lifestyle changes and settings.

Galen L. Cranz and Chelsea Rushton (2024) discuss the transformative potential of Body Conscious Design reforms, emphasizing their personal, social, and ecological dimensions. They argue that communities gain a stronger sense of cohesion and well-being when designed spaces encourage dynamic, health-promoting behaviors. This approach invites urban planners and designers to reconsider sedentary behaviors - particularly sitting - through a Body Conscious Design lens of the first author, which prioritizes the psycho-physical welfare of individuals by attending to posture, alignment, and movement. The authors contend that thoughtful design and educational efforts can shape laws, policies, and social norms to cultivate a culture that encourages movement and posture diversity. They further suggest that this awareness can enhance health and well-being, offering physical, psychological, and social benefits such as increased productivity, greater educational engagement, and a stronger sense of connection to people and places.

Deborah Antoinette Middleton (2024) investigates C. A. Doxiadis's view of pedestrians in urban settings, guided by Bachelard's philosophy that scientific knowledge advances through a historical process of inquiry and problem-solving rather than fixed causal models. Using a mixed-methods approach that includes Conzenian and Space Syntax analysis, the author explores how Doxiadis emphasized connectivity and proximity, integrating social, cultural, and ecological needs into his planning through hierarchical service areas, pedestrian-friendly layouts, and adaptable urban configurations.



Accommodating the urban poor is essential for creating inclusive, sustainable cities that foster social equity and resilience. Average Chigwenia and Tiisetso Dube (2024) highlight the urgent need for a paradigm shift in urban planning to include the urban poor more effectively, both in the Global South and the Global North, with particular emphasis on the rapidly urbanizing cities of the Global South, where expanding informality and slum populations pose a significant challenge. Through interviews and field observations in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, their research highlights a gap between existing planning practices and the principles of the New Urban Agenda, underscoring the need for an urban development approach that is more inclusive, equitable, adaptable, and innovative.

Designing ecotones through engaging liminal space in the built environment is theme of the next paper. Meghan Mick (2024) examines how incorporating liminal spaces - transitional areas between defined zones - into the built environment can lead to more adaptive and resilient designs. She argues that by embracing flexible, permeable edges instead of rigid boundaries, urban spaces can encourage greater interaction and connection, like the adaptability seen in nature's ecotones. The paper's case studies showcase innovative approaches to addressing contemporary challenges through layered, flexible designs that enhance both human and environmental connections.

In the following paper, Firas Al Douri (2024) presents an integrated parametric BIM-based campus life simulation as a decision-support tool. The simulation aims to unify design and analysis processes by generating scenarios and automating design within a human-centered framework. He promotes interactive design methods that facilitate space exploration, analysis, and optimization. The importance of this work lies in its broad applicability to complex, dynamic human-centered design contexts, including quality of life, health, and social simulations, as well as its potential to enhance relationships and interactions in public spaces.

This issue is further enriched by the insightful reviews of three major books by Roderick J. Lawrence, Ian Bentley co-authored with Soham De, Sue McGlynn & Prachi Rampuria, and Ruşen Keleş, written by Ian Fookes, NezHapi-Delle Odeleye, and Tuğçe Uçar Maurer. Their critical reflections strongly complement the theme of this issue.

Overall, this themed issue highlights the significance of prioritizing human elements in the planning and design of places, through a diverse array of contributions from various continents. It reminds us that while technological advancements continue to transform the built environment at a rapid pace, the true success and sustainability of these efforts lie in meeting the needs, values, and aspirations of the people who inhabit and interact with these spaces.

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